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AUG 04 2008

In re Application of
Hirofumi Honda
Application No. 09/262,595
Filed: March 5, 1999
Attorney Docket No. 107156-09007

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the renewed petition under the unintentional provisions of 37 CFR 1.137(b), filed January 15, 2008, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The application became abandoned for failure to timely pay the issue and publication fees on or before March 4, 2002 as required by the Notice of Allowance and Fee(s) Due, mailed December 3, 2001, which set a statutory period for reply of three (3) months. Accordingly, the application became abandoned on June 5, 2002. The Notice of Abandonment was mailed May 2, 2002.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply, unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(m); (3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required by 37 CFR 1.137(d). Where there is a question as to whether either the abandonment or the delay in filing a petition under 37 CFR 1.137 was unintentional, the Director may require additional information. See MPEP 711.03(c)(III)(C) and (D). The instant petition lacks item(s) (3).

The showing of record raises questions as to whether the abandonment of this application was unintentional within the meaning of 35 USC 41(a)(7) and CFR 1.137(b).

There are three periods to be considered during the evaluation of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b):

- (1) the delay in reply that originally resulted in the abandonment;
- (2) the delay in filing an initial petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the application; and
- (3) the delay in filing a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the application.

Currently, the delay has not been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional for period (2).

As to Period (2):

The patent statute at 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Director to revive an "unintentionally abandoned application." The legislative history of Public Law 97-247 reveals that the purpose of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) is to permit the Office to have more discretion than in 35 U.S.C. §§ 133 or 151 to revive abandoned applications in appropriate circumstances, but places a limit on this discretion, stating that "[u]nder this section a petition accompanied by either a fee of \$500 or a fee of \$50 would not be granted where the abandonment or the failure to pay the fee for issuing the patent was intentional as opposed to being unintentional or unavoidable." [emphasis added]. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 6-7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 770-71. The revival of an intentionally abandoned application is antithetical to the meaning and intent of the statute and regulation.

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Commissioner to accept a petition "for the revival of an unintentionally abandoned application for a patent." As amended December 1, 1997, 37 CFR 1.137(b)(3) provides that a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by a statement that the delay was unintentional, but provides that "[t]he Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional." Where, as here there is a question whether the initial delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b). See *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989); 37 CFR 1.137(b). Here in view of the inordinate delay in resuming prosecution, there is a question whether the entire delay was unintentional. Petitioner should note that the issue is not whether some of the delay was unintentional by any party; rather, the issue is whether the entire delay has been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional.

Where the applicant deliberately chooses not to seek or persist in seeking the revival of an abandoned application, or where the applicant deliberately chooses to delay seeking the revival of an abandoned application, the resulting delay in seeking revival of the abandoned application cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). See MPEP 711.03(c).

The language of both 35 USC 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b) are clear and unambiguous, and furthermore, without qualification. That is, the delay in filing the reply during prosecution, as well as in filing the petition seeking revival, must have been, without qualification, "unintentional" for the reply to now be accepted on petition. The Office requires that the entire delay be at least unintentional as a prerequisite to revival of an abandoned application to prevent abuse and injury to the public. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 771 ("[i]n order to prevent abuse and injury to the public the Commissioner . . . could require applicants to act promptly after becoming aware of the abandonment"). The December 1997 change to 37 CFR 1.137 did not create any new right to overcome an intentional delay in seeking revival, or in renewing an attempt at seeking revival, of an abandoned application. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53160 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 87 (October 21, 1997), which clearly stated clear that any protracted delay could trigger, as here, a request for additional information. As the courts have since made clear, a protracted delay in seeking revival, as here, requires a petitioner's detailed explanation seeking to excuse the delay as opposed to USPTO acceptance of a general allegation of unintentional delay. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633, at 1637-8 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005) at *21-*23. Statements are required from the responsible person(s) having firsthand knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the protracted delay, after the abandonment date, in seeking revival. In particular, petitioner must submit:

- (A) further information as to when the applicant (or applicant's representative) first became aware of the abandonment of the application; and
- (B) a showing as to how the delay in discovering the abandoned status of the application occurred despite the exercise of due care or diligence on the part of the applicant (or applicant's representative). See MPEP 711.03(c).

This information was first requested in the petition decision mailed on or about December 25, 2007, but was not provided in the renewed petition filed January 15, 2008. In the Petition to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment filed April 25, 2005, petitioner indicated that the abandonment of this application was discovered on April 19, 2005 through a telephone inquiry with Examiner Yenke. However, petitioner has not explained the circumstances of this discovery such as the reason for the inquiry, the matters discussed, or why such a telephone inquiry to the

examiner or other appropriate official was not attempted since the previous amendment was filed on November 13, 2001.

Furthermore, petitioner asserts in the renewed petition that the previous written status inquiries demonstrated diligence. However, the evidence on record does not support this assertion. MPEP §203.08 II states in pertinent part:

Amended applications are expected to be taken up by the examiner and an action completed within two months of the date the examiner receives the application. Accordingly, a status inquiry is not in order after reply by the attorney until 5 or 6 months have elapsed with no response from the Office. However, in the event that a six month period has elapsed, and no response from the Office is received, applicant should inquire as to the status of the application to avoid potential abandonment.

Rather than inquire promptly after a six month period from the November 13, 2001 filing of an amendment, petitioner waited 14 months to file a status request on January 16, 2003. Petitioner then waited an additional 16 months to file another status request on May 17, 2004. The record is not clear as to why a telephone status inquiry to the examiner or other appropriate official was not attempted in this 30 month period. The evidence of record does not demonstrate that such delayed status inquiries represent diligence.

Please provide further information in regards to the above within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By Mail: Mail Stop PETITION
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By hand: U. S. Patent and Trademark Office
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 Randolph Building
 401 Dulany Street
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The centralized facsimile number is (571) 273-8300.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision should be directed to Terri Williams at (571) 272-2991.

Chris Bottorff

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